

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1           1.       A method of preparing French fried potato pieces comprising the  
2 steps of:  
3                   obtaining chilled, par-fried potato pieces; and  
4                   surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus  
5 having an exit into a clean room environment.
- 1           2.       A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the surface  
2 pasteurizing step comprises surface pasteurizing in a pasteurization apparatus  
3 selected from the group consisting of an impingement oven, a steam tunnel, an  
4 ultra violet light tunnel, and radurization equipment.
- 1           3.       A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   chilling the potato pieces in a clean room environment after the step  
3 of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus.
- 1           4.       A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:  
2                   aseptically packaging the potato pieces in a clean room environment  
3 after the step of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization  
4 apparatus.
- 1           5.       A method in accordance with Claim 1, further comprising:

2 packaging the potato pieces in a modified atmosphere in a clean  
3 room environment after the step of surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a  
4 pasteurization apparatus.

1 6. A method in accordance with Claim 5, wherein the potato pieces  
2 packaged in a clean room environment have a shelf life of at least 60 days at  
3 refrigerated temperatures.

1 7. A method of preparing French fried potato pieces comprising the  
2 steps of:  
3 obtaining chilled, par-fried potato pieces; and  
4 surface pasteurizing the potato pieces in a pasteurization apparatus  
5 having an exit into a clean room environment, the surface pasteurizing providing  
6 at least one final microbial count selected from the group consisting of:

7 less than 1.0-3.0 log CFU/g aerobic plate count;

8 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g coliforms;

9 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g *Escherchia coli*;

10 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g *Staphylococcus aureus*;

11 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g molds; and

12 less than 1.0 to 1.0 log CFU/g yeasts;

13                    wherein the potato pieces are negative for *Listeria monocytogenes*,

14     *Salmonella*, *Clostridium botulinum*, *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, and

15     *Staphylococcus aureus*.